



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Prevent Sanitary Sewer Backups During the Coronavirus Shelter-In-Place

As residents spend more time in their homes, we may see an increase in sewer backups caused by non-toilet paper products (e.g., tissue paper, wipes), fats, oils, and grease entering the sanitary sewer system (as often occurs during the holiday season). Improper disposal of fats, oils, and grease, also referred to as FOG, can cause inconvenient, messy, and costly sewer overflows. You can help prevent a sewer emergency during the shelter-in-place period by properly disposing of fats, oils, and grease:

- Never pour cooking oils or grease into your kitchen sink, bathroom sink, toilet, or any other household or outdoor drain.
- Collect fats, oils, and grease in a container to cool and harden. When the container is full, cover it tightly and place it in a bag to prevent leakage, then dispose of it in the garbage.
- Minimize the use of kitchen sink garbage disposals by scraping dishes into the garbage first. Ground food particles and grease may still clog pipes and effect the downstream sewer system, causing sewer backups for your neighbors down the street.
- Scrape or use paper towels to wipe food scraps or grease from pots, pans, and plates into the garbage before washing them in the sink or dishwasher.

Place a wastebasket in the bathroom to dispose of solid waste. Do not use the toilet as a wastebasket for garbage.

- Toilet paper is designed to be flushed. However, other products such as disposable diapers, personal hygiene products, cotton swabs, paper towels, tissues and wipes (even those that claim to be "flushable") all belong in the garbage as they do not break down and therefore can cause clogs in the sewer systems.

If you experience a sanitary sewer backup, call the City of Los Altos Maintenance Division at (650) 947-2875 between 8:00am to 5:00pm, Monday through Friday. For weekend and after hour calls, contact the Police Department's business line at (650) 947-2770. Staff is available day and night to check the main sewer line. If it is clear and flowing, but a blockage is in the lateral, the property owner will need to call a plumber to clear the line.

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